

New Video Media Competition at Hidden Earth 2006

This year's caving conference* sees a new style of video competition and a new prize structure for the video and photo salons. David Gibson explains the changes.



Video Media Competition

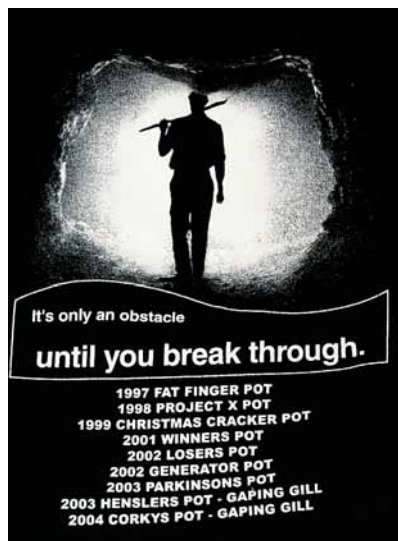
In Speleology 6 we said that we might make 'slight changes' to the Video and AV Salons this year. In fact, after much discussion amongst the Hidden Earth team, we have decided to make a greater change, combining the competitions under a new title, Video Media.

The term 'video media' is intended to encompass all depictions of moving images and sequences of pictures.

This broad definition of video means that, for 2006, there will *not* be separate competition categories for films and audio-visual presentations.

Traditionally, films and AVs were easily definable, the latter comprising a number of slide projectors showing stills and an audio soundtrack. However, the use of computers means that the distinction between these art-forms is blurred. If we take the view that this competition is to encourage innovation and fresh artistic ideas then it would be a mistake to try to circumscribe what constitutes each art form.

Most entrants will probably find that their work still falls into a film or audio-visual genre but they may, if they wish,



▲ Bradford Pothole Club's entry in the HE-2005 Club T-Shirt competition. ▼ Alan Jeffreys at the HE-2005 closing ceremony. Photos: David Gibson

★ Hidden Earth 2006 will take place on September 22-24 in the market town of Leek on the edge of the Derbyshire Peak District. For more information – including competition entry forms and online booking – see hidden-earth.org.uk

mix moving and still images, or use pan and zoom effects on stills, and be confident that their competition entry will still be acceptable.

The skills involved in filming and creating AVs are complementary, so there is the danger that judging them together in one category could be to the detriment of both. But, in reality, the position is perhaps no different to that of other art prizes – the Turner prize does not distinguish between oil paintings and video installations.

The Hidden Earth judges will award two equal-value first prizes and will give an unspecified number of distinction and merit awards. The judges will award the prizes in a way that best recognises the varied skills of the entrants and the merits of their work. For 2006, at least, this will probably mean that one prize will go to a film-like entry and one prize to an AV-like entry but, in the absence of sufficiently meritorious entries, the judges could award the top prizes to two films or two AVs, or to entries that exhibited the characteristics of both. The judges will be particularly looking for artistic originality and innovation, as well as considering the artistic, technical, and aesthetic qualities of each entry (see box).

This year, we will also be allowing longer duration presentations, of up to 20 minutes including titles. In order to allow us to plan the judging and screening of longer entries, competition entry on the day will be *expressly prohibited* this year. And if the presentation is longer than 10 minutes, the judges will be looking for clear evidence that the longer length is artistically necessary.

Artistic, Technical and Aesthetic Qualities

The guidelines for the Photo and Video competitions mention these three aspects of the judging, but what is meant by these terms?

The Artistic quality of your work will depend on its composition, lighting and subject matter. For a photograph this may mean that instead of a simple 'point and shoot' approach, you consider how the different elements of your picture fit together. For a video the term would encompass the storyboard and the skill in editing. An AV work has its own special artistic features – it is not simply a series of still images. The judges will be looking for originality and innovation – has this particular type of photo been seen before? Has a video camera been used this way before?

For a photograph, the Technical Qualities show themselves in how the image is presented, and they demonstrate whether you know how to use your equipment. Is the picture in focus? Has the photo been printed to a high quality? For conventional printing, was the negative free from dust, hairs and scratches? For a digital print, are there any 'tram-lines'

Photographic Competition

There will still be a major first prize in each category but, instead of awarding second and third prizes, we shall be awarding an unspecified number of merit and distinction awards, which the judges will distribute amongst the competition categories, in order to recognise merit where it is seen. We hope that this more flexible way of awarding prizes will make the competition more interesting and challenging.

Prize-winners in the Photo, Video and Art salons will take home an exclusive competition souvenir. A sort of Hidden Earth 'Crackerjack' pencil, if you like.

We have made other, minor, changes to the rules. These include, for example, removing the restrictions on the sizes of prints. Clearly, a very small photograph does not have the artistic impact of a larger one but we feel that this point is so obvious it does not need to be stated in the rules.

Art Competition

We need to remind artists that it makes the organisers' jobs much easier if you could complete an entry form in advance, so we can assess the space needed for the displays. Large free-standing artwork that simply turns up on the day may have to be moved to a less favourable location.

Other Competitions

The surveying competition, SRT challenges, club T-shirt and caving club stand competitions will run as usual. ■

visible on the print. (In recent years, this has been a major problem with many of the photos on display). Are the colour-depth and image-resolution satisfactory? Has the image been over-sharpened or similarly abused? Are there any compression artefacts visible at a normal viewing distance. Is the photo well-mounted or does it curl up at the edges? For videos and AVs, have you demonstrated compliance with music copyright laws (e.g. by displaying your licence)?

Aesthetics means, in essence, *was the image worth looking at?* Was it beautiful, inspiring, shocking, or thought-provoking? Did it appeal to the senses? Will the people who saw it remember it, or did they just stare blankly at it and move on to the next one.

In the Video Media salon, a rousing presentation with good music and humorous images could be enjoyed by the audience, even if it did not demonstrate a great deal of artistic or technical merit. For the first prize, the judges will be looking for a good balance of all three qualities of the work. But, with our new system of merit awards we hope to be able to recognise *all* merit.